

**Remarks at the Funeral Service for
Former White House Press Secretary
Tony Snow**
July 17, 2008

Archbishop Wuerl; Father O'Connell; Mr. Vice President; members of the Cabinet and my administration; Members of Congress; distinguished guests; most importantly, the Snow family, Jill, Robbie, Kendall, Kristi, and Jim and other family members; former colleagues of Tony: Laura and I are privileged to join you today to pay our final respects to a cherished friend.

Tony Snow was a man of uncommon decency and compassion. He was a devoted husband, a proud and loving father, an adoring son, a beloved colleague, and a wonderful role model and friend.

In a life that was far too brief, he amassed a rare record of accomplishment. He applied his gifted mind to many fields: as a columnist, newspaper editor, TV anchor, radio host, and musician. He had the sometimes challenging distinction of working for two Presidents named Bush. As a speechwriter in my dad's administration, Tony tried to translate the President's policies into English. [Laughter] As a spokesman in my administration, Tony tried to translate my English into English. [Laughter]

Tony always gave me good and candid advice. He was a man of profound substance who loved ideas, held strong beliefs, and reveled in defending them. He took very seriously his duty to inform the public about what its Government was doing during historic times for our Nation.

In the White House briefing room, Tony worked to build a relationship of candor and trust with the press corps. On his first day at the podium, he told the gathered reporters this: "One of the reasons I took this job is not only because I believe in the President, but because, believe it or not, I want to work with you." Tony was the first working journalist to serve as the White House Press Secretary for nearly 30 years. He knew the job of a reporter was rigorous. He admired the profession and always treated it with respect. And the presence of so many members of the fourth estate here today attests to the admiration and respect that he earned.

Of course, Tony's adjustment from commentator to spokesman was not seamless. Ann Compton of ABC recently recalled that when you asked Tony a question, he would sometimes get going, and she would have to stop him, and say: "Tony, wait, I asked what the President thought." [Laughter]

Tony brought a fierce and challenging intellect to his duties, and he displayed an engaging wit. When a reporter asked a rather labored question about Congress, Tony did not answer it. The persistent reporter pressed him: "Are you going to just evade that question?" With a smile, Tony quipped: "No, I'm going to laugh at it." [Laughter]

I believe the reason Tony was so good at his job is that he looked at the world in a joyful way. He was a proud patriot who believed in America's goodness and an optimist who knew America's possibilities. He believed strongly in the wisdom of the American people. And throughout his career, he took a special pride in being a vigorous and unapologetic defender of our men and women in uniform. He supported their missions, saw honor in their achievements, and found every possible opportunity to highlight their character and courage.

Tony Snow, the professional, is a hard act to follow. Tony Snow, the man, is simply irreplaceable. Everyone who worked with him quickly grew to love him. We will always remember his wry sense of humor and abundant goodness. We'll also remember he was just a lot of fun. After all, he played six different musical instruments and was a proud member of a band called Beats Working. He may be one of the few people in history to have jammed on the South Lawn of the White House and with Jethro Tull. [Laughter]

We remember Tony's thoughtfulness. No matter how busy he was, this was a man who put others first. He would go out of his way to ask about people's families. He would check in with friends whenever he heard they were ill. He'd reach out to others, sometimes strangers, who were struggling with cancer. Even when he was going through difficult chemotherapy sessions, he sent inspirational e-mails to a friend whose son was suffering from a serious illness.

We remember Tony's resilient spirit. When he received a second diagnosis of cancer, he did not turn to despair. He saw it as another challenge to tackle. He found comfort in the prayers he received from millions of Americans. As he told the graduates here at Catholic University last year: "Never underestimate the power of other people's love and prayer. They have incredible power. It's as if I've been carried on the shoulders of an entire army, and they made me weightless."

Most of all, we remember Tony's love of his family. There was no doubt for Tony Snow that his family was first. When Jill reached a milestone birthday, Tony had a huge celebration. He later said that he and Jill danced that night as if they were teenagers. He said he was the most fortunate man in the world to have shared love like that. So today, Jill, our hearts are with you. And we thank you for giving Tony such a special life.

For Robbie, Kendall, and Kristi, you are in our thoughts and prayers as well. We thank you for sharing your dad with us. He talked about you all the time. He wanted nothing more than your happiness and success. You know, I used to call Tony on the weekends to get his advice. And invariably, I found him with you on the soccer field or at a swim meet or helping with your homework. He loved you a lot. Today I hope you know that we loved him a lot too.

I know it's hard to make sense of today. It is impossible to fully comprehend why such a good and vital man was taken from us so soon. But these are the great mysteries of life, and Tony knew as well as anyone that they're not ours to unveil.

The day Tony was born was also the day that many of his fellow Catholics pay tribute to Saint Justin. Justin was also a gifted thinker and writer and a powerful witness for the Christian faith. Because of his beliefs, he suffered many times of trial, and in the year 165 A.D., he was arrested. Before he received a sentence of death, he was asked: "If you are killed, do you suppose you will go to heaven?" Justin replied: "I do not suppose it, but I know and am fully persuaded of it."

Tony Snow knew that as well. That brought him great peace. When talking about the struggle he waged so admirably, he said that no matter how bad times may sometimes seem, "God doesn't promise tomorrow; he does promise eternity."

And so today we send this man of faith and character and joy on his final journey. Tony Snow has left the city of Washington for the city of God. May he find eternal rest in the arms of his Savior. And may the Author of all creation watch over his family and all those who loved him, admired him, and will always cherish his memory.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:16 a.m. at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. In his remarks, he referred to Donald W. Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington; Father David M. O'Connell, president, Catholic University of America; and Jim Snow, father of Tony Snow. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following an Aerial Tour of Areas Damaged by Wildfires in Redding, California

July 17, 2008

The President. It's been my honor to travel with the Governor and the Senator and Forest Service folks and the fire folks here in California to see the fires. Couple of things I'd like to reflect on, and I asked the Governor to say a couple of words.

One, I always come to make sure that the Federal Government is coordinating closely with the State government. I know Governor Schwarzenegger well enough to tell you that if we weren't, he'd let me know.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California. That's right.

The President. And I want to thank those in the—who work for the Federal Government for their hard work and willingness to respond quickly and their service to our country.

Secondly, I want to say something to the firefighters. We had the privilege of going and meeting some of these smoke jumpers. These are unusual people who are very courageous, determined, and dedicated. And I had this special sense there, when I was with